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Talitha Kum Japan is a network group among Association of Major Superiors of Women Religious and Association of Major Religious Superiors in Japan in collaboration with J-CaRM (Catholic Commission of Japan for Migrants, Refugees and People on the Move) commissioned by CBCJ (Catholic Bishop Conference of Japan) to counteract trafficking in persons.

Talitha Kum!

~ Reflection by Sr. Wakayo Morishita, FMA

Newly Appointed Chairperson of Talitha Kum Japan Steering Committee

Jesus took the child's hand and said, Talitha Kum! which means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise! [Mark 5:41]



My name is Sister Wakayo Morishita and I have been appointed as the Chairperson of the Talitha Kum Japan Steering Committee, succeeding Sister Junko Shioya. I look forward to working with you.

It struck me that this phrase Talitha Kum expresses the identity of the worldwide network of consecrated life committed to fighting against trafficking in persons. (www.talithakum.info)

I believe that there are two layers of meaning in this expression:

(1) It means to help people who have had their dignity violated by various forms of exploitation; people who have been deprived of their freedom, and who feel unable to stand up, to actually stand up (Talitha Kum) and regain their dignity and rights.

(2) It also means that we Christians, motivated by the love of Christ, are called to stand up (Talitha Kum), and go and reach out to those who are deprived of justice and equality.

"I say to you, Arise." Jesus says this to each one of us.

But many religious and laity may think, "I have the desire, but I cannot go directly to the vulnerable ones." As I write this, I wondered if many elderly sisters in our congregations feel the same way. The desire is there, but there are limitations. For me, no matter where we are or what we do, the important thing is that we are aware of what is going on; that we care, that we support, and that we pray for people who have been trafficked.

I have met many people through the Talitha Kum networks, and the committee for Migrants and Refugees Commission. These people are working for victims and survivors of trafficking, particularly with technical intern trainees, those who have run away from their employers, and those who have lost their jobs due to the coronavirus pandemic. Talitha Kum Japan holds seminars in the prevention of trafficking and awareness-raising against trafficking; we distribute newsletters; and pamphlets; and we invite people to our prayer meeting to help people become more aware of the current situation. I am convinced that prayer is powerful, especially, the prayer of the elderly.

Christ Jesus always hears our unceasing pleas. Please support our activities with your prayers. Let us stand together (Talitha Kum) in the fight against human trafficking.

Talitha Kum Asia 7th Monthly Series Webinar

Building Awareness on Migration and Labor Exploitation

~ Reported by Sr. Naoko Miyazawa (Salesian Sisters) - Member of the Steering Committee of Talitha Kum Japan

Since October 2020, Talitha Kum networks in Asia have been organizing webinars every month as an opportunity to learn about the situation of human trafficking in Asia and their interventions in the fight against human trafficking. This has become a valuable meeting place for many of us to learn about each other's current situation, pray together, and learn for interventions and preventions of trafficking.

In April this year, Talitha Kum Japan organized the monthly series webinar with the topic of "Building Awareness on Migration and Labor Exploitation". More than 180 participants from various countries around the world attended the webinar on April 17, 2021.

In the opening remarks, Bishop Michiaki Yamanouchi, the Bishop in charge of Talitha Kum Japan, expressed his sympathy for the migrants in Japan. He said, "We can give hope to the migrants if we can understand the current situation of the migrants in Japan and think and practice together how we can support them. In this way we can be their hope. May we be witnesses of Jesus to our most vulnerable brothers and sisters, especially amid this pandemic," he urged.

In the first part of the seminar, Ms. Naoko Sunai of the Technical Intern Trainees Rights Network Secretariat spoke about "the structure of exploitation and discrimination encompassed in migration," especially the current situation of Vietnamese technical interns in Japan. The number of Vietnamese migrating to Japan has been increasing every year. She also explained that there are more women than men coming to Japan and that this is due to the influence of Confucianism, where children support their parents financially. Mothers and daughters take on the responsibility of supporting their families and try to earn an income by going abroad. Japan's technical internship system claims to transfer technology overseas, but in reality, it is often pointed out that the trainees are being exploited as a labor force.

In many cases, various human rights violations have been committed, including low wages, long working hours, intermediate exploitation, payment of deposits and penalties, sexual harassment and forced deportation. Ms. Sunai cited from her study the case of one woman who was forced to work at a sewing factory from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 a.m. of the following day, with few days off and take-home pay of 80,000 yen (800 USD a month), with no overtime pay. She was not allowed to go out and suffered so much from verbal abuse at work. She was able to get help from advocate support NGO groups. The Japanese government asked the companies to improve the treatment of the trainees, but the companies ignored the request. Recently, there was also a case where an intern became pregnant and was forced to return to her home country. Ms. Sunai shared the current situation where Vietnamese technical interns were forced to live under various restrictions and burdens.



GROUP PHOTO OF WEBINAR PARTICIPANTS ON APRIL 17, 2021

The second part of the webinar was the panel discussion facilitated by Sr. Abby Avelino, MM. The two panelists Ms. Naoko Maruyama, Regional Coordinator in Asia / Oceania of the Vatican Dicastery Migrant and Refugee Section, and Ms. Motoko Yamagishi, Executive Secretary of the Japan National Network in Solidarity with Migrants and member of the Talitha Kum Japan Steering Committee spoke on the theme of "Migrants and their Vulnerability to Human Trafficking."

They responded to the following questions:
(1) How can we prevent labor exploitation?

(2) What are recommendations and suggestions for a safe migration?

Ms. Maruyama shared the importance of education and awareness-building for potential labor migrants/victims of labor exploitation and human trafficking, as well as the importance of encouraging and supporting witnesses to effectively report cases and start an educational campaign based on real life experiences to prevent labor exploitation and different types of human trafficking. She stressed the need for better regulation of, and transparency from, recruitment agencies through effective implementation of labor laws and an external party to oversee compliance to prevent exploitation, contract changes and subsequent trafficking upon arrival. And reminded us that the churches in each country should work together to create a contract to reform labor laws, ensure compliance, and prevent exploitation.

Ms. Yamagishi pointed out the awareness-raising and importance of the rights of migrant workers, stating that it is possible to adapt Japanese labor laws to migrant workers. Regarding the issue of pregnancy among trainees, which has been increasing recently, she noted that there have been cases where technical intern trainees were forced to have an abortion or quit their jobs or suffered forced deportation because they are unaware of Japanese labor laws. Women must be treated fairly. She also pointed out that when companies imposed the cutting of working hours due to the Covid-19 pandemic, many of them were not informed that they could also get benefits from subsidies. So the government, NGO groups, and church support groups must inform them that they have such rights. She also pointed out the need for the Japanese government to make drastic changes in its policies for foreign workers.

The third part, the Q & A session was facilitated by Sr. Abby Avelino, MM. The three panelists addressed the questions from the participants which deepened the understanding of "Migrant Workers and Exploitation". Many participants from other countries were shocked to hear about the situation of trafficking in Japan. That triggered more interest in continuing networking between sending and destination countries, particularly in Vietnam and Japan.

Sister Junko Shioya, the outgoing Chairperson of the Steering Committee of Talitha Kum Japan, gave the closing remarks by quoting Pope Francis' encyclical "Fratelli tutti". *We should cultivate an attitude and culture that is willing to accept people of other cultures in our lives. More than ever, migration plays a pivotal role in the future of our world. Migration enriches us creatively as individuals, as groups, and as human beings.*" She said that it is important for us to deepen our understanding of migration through education and awareness-raising campaigns.

We learned a lot about the situation of migrant workers in Japan especially the reality of the Vietnamese technical interns. It was a very engaging and participative webinar.



"In order to tackle this global challenge and find systemic solutions, we recognise that we must work with organisations in the private sector, governments, NGOs and civil society. ...we ask our networks and partners to stand together and amplify our efforts to transform the economy of trafficking into an economy of care that empowers everyone, and especially women, to foster safe and thriving communities." - Talitha Kum Activation Message (July 30, 2021)

#CareAgainstTrafficking
#JobsAgainstTrafficking
#JusticeAgainstTrafficking

LABOR EXPLOITATION CASE REPORT

CASE 1 - SHELTER AND LEGAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Hanh, a Vietnamese woman, came to Japan in January 2019 as a technical intern to work in a plastics manufacturing company in Aichi Prefecture. Her parents borrowed 900,000 yen as recruitment payment for her to go to Japan. After six months of working, she got into trouble with her co-worker who suspected her of stealing her colleague's personal belongings. She was brought to a supervisory organization, where she was forced to sign a resignation letter.

After that incident, she was worried she would be sent back home. Ms. Han consulted the "Hotline for Vietnamese Technical Interns" with the support of the Gifu General Labor Union. She did not have a place to stay. She was helped and placed in a temporary shelter in Gifu while her case was ongoing. She was given legal support with the help of the Gifu Labor Union. The company and the supervisory organization were very stubborn, and they never admitted that they had forced her to resign. The case took longer, and she could not apply for unemployment benefits because the company did not provide a working release form. She did not have income, so she had to stay in a shelter for a long time. Talitha Kum Japan/JCaRM assisted her with shelter expenses from the Emergency Temporary Assistance Fund. After a while, through the assistance of the Labor Union, she was able to obtain a one-year status of residence as a transitional period toward obtaining a specified-skill status. She was able to find a job at a food processing company. She hopes to continue working in Japan by passing the qualification test for specified-skill visa status. We, Talitha Kum Japan, continue to provide the necessary support to those migrants in need, especially technical intern trainees who have suffered so much in human/labor rights violations. We continue to do awareness-raising to promote the rights of technical intern trainees and provide necessary assistance for them to work in a stable/peaceful manner, rather than worried about being forced to return home.

CASE 2 - LEGAL ASSISTANCE FOR WORK-RELATED ACCIDENT

Mr. Quy, a Vietnamese technical intern, had been working as a construction worker since he came to Japan in 2019. Last year an accident happened at a construction site due to the collapse of scaffolding which hit Mr. Quy. He was rushed to the hospital by ambulance. He was sent home without proper medical treatment despite his severely injured condition. He had to ask his friend to buy his own medicine.

After the accident, Mr. Quy took two weeks off from work. The company paid him only 70% of five days salary while he was on leave. However, Mr. Quy worked six days a week. Mr. Quy wondered why he was only being paid for five days a week, so he consulted at the Vietnamese Technical Internship Hotline with the support of Talitha Kum Japan.

After hearing about the situation and the lawyer said, "it's a work-related accident, so he should have been paid 100% of the working days as stipulated in the contract. He was advised to file a claim for the 30% of Monday to Friday salary and 100% for Saturday. Often, many technical intern trainees are not aware of their rights as workers. The language barrier and the power relationship with the employer are also hindrance factors that prevent them from asserting their rights. Talitha Kum Japan continues to work towards a society where the dignity and rights of each individual is protected.



"We won't stand in silence while people in every corner of the world suffer as a result of human trafficking. We unite with survivors to care against human trafficking." - Talitha Kum Activation Message (July 30,2021)
#CareAgainstTrafficking

July 30: Online Prayer for the “UN World Day Against Trafficking in Persons”

~ Talitha Kum Japan Secretariat Committee

Care Against Trafficking!

July 30 is designated by the United Nations as the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons. Talitha Kum Japan has organized online prayer since last year. The theme of Talitha Kum this year was “Care Against Trafficking. This campaign was launched on July 30 stating that: *On World Day Against Trafficking In Persons, we ask our networks and partners to stand together and amplify our efforts to transform the economy of trafficking into an economy of care that empowers everyone, and especially women, to foster safe and thriving communities.* It further emphasized that "we must work with the private sector, governments, NGOs and civil society organizations to address this global challenge and seek systemic solutions.

In response to this call for collaboration, Talitha Kum Japan organized the online prayer event with the theme of “Inter-religious Prayer for Victims and Survivors of Trafficking in Persons”. This event was a collaborative event of Talitha Kum Japan and the WCRP (World Conference of Religions for Peace) Anti-Trafficking Task Force. Sr. Morishita (Salesian Sisters), Chairperson of the Talitha Kum Japan Steering Committee, opened the event with her remarks as, *we gathered here as people of faith not only Christian but also with other religions to pray for the victims and survivors of human trafficking.*

The event was well attended by about 300 people with an introduction of the survivor story; reality of human trafficking in Japan through the experience of Nguyen-san, a Vietnamese technical intern. The prayer started by the Catholic Church representative, Bishop Michiaki Yamanouchi, then followed by representatives of Buddhism, Shintoism and Islam.

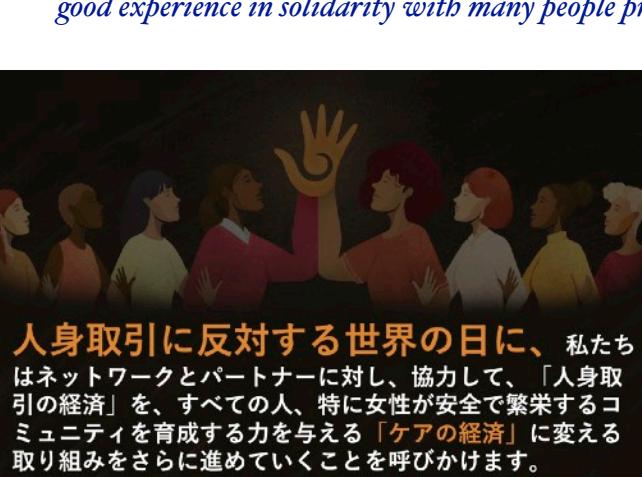
The prayer gathering concluded with Zazen meditation led by Sr. Katherine Reiley (Maryknoll Sister). This year's prayer gathering connected us in ONENESS regardless of our varied religions, in a spirit of solidarity, as we expressed our care for victims and survivors of trafficking through the POWER of PRAYER!

Some of the comments from the participants:

Thank you for offering such a valuable experience. It was a great joy to be able to pray with you all.

Thank you for organizing and preparing the prayer for the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons online. I was touched by the experience of praying together beyond denominational boundaries.

I was happy to know that we pray together for the survivors with the other faith-based group...beautiful liturgies. It was a good experience in solidarity with many people praying together.”



News and Upcoming Event: Talitha Kum Japan Secretariat Committee

NOTICE OF CHANGE: Chairperson of Talitha Kum Japan Steering Committee



Sr. Junko Shioya, ACI



Sr. Morishita, FMA

As of April 2021, Sister Junko Shioya (Sisters of Handmaids of Sacred Heart of Jesus), who served as the Chairperson of the Steering Committee since the establishment of Talitha Kum Japan, has resigned. We are very grateful for her service and dedication to Talitha Kum Japan. Our sincere gratitude!

We welcome Sister Wakayo Morishita as the new Chairperson of Talitha Kum Japan Steering Committee.



Sr. Abby Avelino, MM

APPOINTMENT: Sr. Abby Avelino, MM - Talitha Kum Asia Coordinator

March 2021, Sister Abby Avelino (Talitha Kum Japan Steering Committee/Maryknoll Sister) was appointed as the Talitha Kum International Coordinating Committee (TKICC) regional coordinator referent to Asia.

NEW STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBER

We welcome Father Tien Nguyen (Columban Priest) as new member of Talitha Kum Japan Steering Committee, representing the Association of Major Religious Superiors in Japan (Men).

UPCOMING TALITHA KUM JAPAN SEMINAR

Talitha Kum Japan works together with many people of goodwill in the line of knowing, praying, and action in the fight against human trafficking. On October 16 this year, we plan to hold an online seminar. We will post on the J-CaRM (Talitha Kum Japan) website and distribute the flyer as soon as we can.

SAVE THE DATE!

OCTOBER 16, 2021 (SATURDAY) - 14:00 ~ 16:00

ONLINE SEMINAR

TOPIC: ONE YEAR LATER: THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

We thank you for your generous financial support for Talitha Kum Japan. The donation will be used to provide support for victims and survivors of human trafficking for shelter expenses, emergency living expenses, legal casework, translation/interpretation expenses, newsletter, seminars, and workshops for the prevention of Trafficking in Persons.

~Japan Post Bank money transfer form is available at the J-CaRM Secretariat office~

Postal # 00110-8-560351

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